10 July 1969

Harold:

Enclosed is an article from a recent issue of The Councilor dealing with MLK and the FBI. I send it because it ties in with your info that black leaders fear release of personal material. Obviously, I do not put unquestioning faith in what the Councilor says, but I think it worth watching, for as FBI admireres they may have a line to inside sources. I considered this article plausible, but unacceptable for lack of documentation. Perhaps that will follow.

I have material that I got from Lifton last year, mostly regarding you and Thornley, and Schoener has been keeping me up to date on recent developments. My correspondence with Lifton has been sparse and non-committal vis-a-vis you. I think it best to continue on "friendly"terms, for I do not enjoy his confidence to a degree that would make my defense of you effective, and it is possible that, believing me ignorant, he might tell me things that he would not tell others, or perhaps try to influence me. I strongly doubt that I even referred to you in my recent correspondence, so it is extremely unlikely that he got any of your material from me. I don't have a copy of my recent (two, I think) letters to him, but my memory indicates that I did not mention you. I cannot be absolutely sure, only because I do not have copies of my correspondence before me-- but otherwise, I am sure. The only part of COUP that I copied was the section on Bieberdorf, which I sent to Schoener with information on the suggestions that I had given to you about that affair. I loaned it overnight to a Toronto Star reporter, Earl McRae, but he did not read much of it and I am quite sure that he did not copy any of it-- "sure" on the basis of my confidence in McRae, and on the short time that he had it. I may also have outlined some parts of it in a letter to Eric Lincoln but since he later read the whole thing, that is of no matter. Other than what is mentioned above, the material has not gotten out of my hands.

My difficulty in dealing with Lifton and others who might be influenced by Lifton is that I do not have contact with many of the people involved. Where I do have contact, I do not always get confidence. My regationship with Gary Murr has somehow been sabotaged, deliberately or not, by people who have influenced him to believe that I am CIA. My contact with him, which could have been fruitful for both of us, was cut off suddenly and completely. It rankles me, for I was getting on well with Murr and we could have done good work together. I believe that he is still in touch with Newcomb, but I am not sure who else-- perhaps Gough. Newcomb is not the source of Gary Murr's feelings; rather he was the recipient, a factor that caused Newcomb at first to treat me with coolness.

My correspondence with Newcomb dealt mainly with the issues that concern him and me, not with individuals. I don't think I have mentioned to him, either, any of the material in Coup.

Newcomb may be about to retract his material on the "Last Train"; he came into some new evidence which he is now checking; apparently it badly shook his confidence in the train. This reversion of his is independent of some criticism that I sent him refuting the train-- something I thought conclusive (the lack of the train in the background of the pergola windows on the right side of Betzner). Our letters crossed in the mail. So if he is wrong, he will have proved himself wrong, and will make a proper retraction. Also he is feeling like an ass.

I think Newcomb is right, however, about the doctoring of Willis 5. I base this on a comparison between Willis 5 and the picture by J. Towner published in Life. Both pictures were taken from very nerly the same position. The lowest row of pergola windows in Willis is the same color as the other rows, but in Towner the color of the lowest row is different from the other rows-- i.e., Towner shows the background, but Willis does not. I cannot imagine what was removed (well, I can imagine, but it would be pure guesswork), but unless I see good refutation I shall persist in believing that one of those pictures-- probably Willis-- was doctored.

I have looked through some books for printed references to barrel vibrations, but have found only passing references. I'll check magazine articles-- I have a couple hundred. Also I'll write to the NRA and learn if they ever did a piece on it. There is nothing in The Amer. Rifleman for the past few years, but NRA may have done something before that, and I know where I can get back copies.

I do not understand this in your letter: " You were going to send me a brief memo of your interview with Sneyd." Good grief, I only wish that I had had such an interview! I suspect that you mean (the real) Eric Galt. An outline in enclosed. Briefly, Galt verified everything that Sprague told me, and added very little. I believe I already sent you information on the story that I got from Sprague.

If McRae can give me a lead for tracing Claire Keating and Blanch van Lueven, two women in Canada who knew Ray, I'LL try to track down their information.

Sprague told me that Huie said he had interviewed three people who saw Ray and Raoul together. I wrote to Sprague to learn whether the ~~xxxx~~ three were Canadian and whether he knew their names and could put me on to them. So far I have gotten no answer. I think Sprague has been turned off me, too-- partly (perhaps much) my own fault for treating him with suspicion and offensively after the Farewell America trap. Whatever his faults, he is a valuable contact for me, and I hate to lose him.

I am still in good touch with young Howard Roffman of Philadelphia, the boy who I mentioned said you made mountains out of molehills. I misunderstood his criticism of you. Apparently he was bothered by the polemic and attention to minutiae. He is a good boy, though, and well worth "cultivating". I give him all the help I can (the effect of which I think has been to confuse him over things about which he previously felt certain-- a good effect, I think, in this situation where much of the evidence is corrupt and not amanable to positive deductions).

He might be able to give us great help in photography. He has all the necessary equipment and does his own work-- all of it excellent. If we could tap his resources we could serve both him (because he wants pictures) and us (because we want to cut expenses). Molesworth is great, but if we can get good stuff for much less expense, I think we should jump at it.

Roffman sent me a picture that he had the archive make for him. It shows the bases of CEs 399, 572 (Frazier's test bullets), and 853 (the bullet that passed through a goat). 399 and 853 are both flattened along the sides, but the ones in 572 are round. According to Roffman 853 weighs 158.8 grains and lost no lead in fragments (this seems evident even from the picture of its base). The base of 399 is slightly more mashed than the others and shows a spot might have lost a fragment, although I don't see how a fragment can have gone from that spot.

The picture is listed as Record Group No. 220; that is what is stamped on the back by the archives.

Roffman is writing a book. The format, I think, will be something like Thompson's, with text and pictures. The subject matter is like Thompson's too, only material related to the events on the Plaza. He has asked me to read and criticise when it is ready, and I will. He also wants me to line up others to do the same. I suggested you, Sylvia Meagher, and Gary Schoener. I told him to take his pick and I would try ti line up whom he wants. I suggested Sylvia as first choice, because she is less busy than you.

He had spoken with Jones Harris some time ago, and Harris told Roffman to let him take a look at it when he was finshed and ready to show it. He asked me for Harris' address, but I do not have it. If you have it, please send it to me, so that I can send it to Roffman. I told Roffman that Harris is not his best bet for the kind of material that he is handling, but he may want to show it to Harris in any case.

Roffman knows the material well, but he treats it poorly. I would subscribe to very little of what he says, and would hate to have my name associated with it, but I think he is honest and earnest, and want to do what I can.

The worst of what he is doing is having all the shots come from behind JFK-- even the one that cast him backward. His main problem is that he has not previously shared his work and has been working in a vacuum, free of criticism.

I must stop now.

My thesis is going dreadfully, but I think I will finishe it this summer. The worst of it is that even if it is good it will be worthless-- of use to no one and dealing with the most inconsequential of topics. In short, I hate it. You may remember a pshychological study in which Group 1 was paid high wages to continually move a pile of brick between two spots while Group 2 was paid low wages to build a brick wall in a useful place. Group 1 crapped out fast and quit; Group 2 built a wall. Well, this summer I am Mr. Group 1, moving that old pile of bricks back and forth for all the filthy lucre it can get me. My latest discovery is that the pike that were cought between the two bridges on the Tibur River were much tastier than the pike cought elsewhere on the Tibur. Doesn't that make you want to bait up your hook and fly off to Rome? And hell, when you are dealing with antiquities, you don't even get to taste the fish-- just read about how good they taste.

I have been tasting bass, though, from the lakes around here. Yum, yum; very good. I get out toward evening once or twice a week for a couple of hours at a time and empty all the good spots. Last Sunday I got seven, four of which were over three pounds each, and deeeeeeeeliiiiiishuuuuuussss.

The pike are good, too, but not nearly as good as the pike between the two bridges on the Tibur.

It's fishing that helps me keep my sanity in the face of Tibur pike and (dig this for pedantry) Portunianuses who are really Postumianuses. I bet you don't even know what a Postumianus is, or even whether a Postumianus is a "what" or a "who". Lucky you.

Still,

Dick

Bernabei

cc Schwarz